Produce One Chapter Like It": The Miraculous Inimitability of the Qur'ān's Shortest Chapter

Hamza Andreas Tzortzis
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The Qur'ān presents a challenge to humanity to produce one chapter like it. Its shortest chapter, *Al-Kawthar*, displays a remarkable frequency of linguistic devices and literary features, and it expresses maximal meaning within a unique structure. Informed by both Islamic and Western scholarship, this essay aims to showcase the Qur'ān's miraculous literary and linguistic inimitability by analysing its smallest chapter. It also addresses key objections.

Here is a challenge. Take ten words in any language, formulated into three lines or verses, and add any preposition or linguistic particle you see fit. Produce at least twenty-seven rhetorical devices and literary features. At the same time, ensure it has a unique structure, is timelessly meaningful, and relates to themes within a book that it is part of — the size of the which is over seventy-thousand words. Make sure four of its words are unique and never used again in the book. Ensure each line or verse ends with a rhyme, created by words with the most optimal meanings. Make sure that these words are used only once in the three lines, and not used anywhere else in the book. Ensure that the three lines concisely and eloquently semantically mirror the chapter before it, and they must formulate a profound response to an unplanned set of circumstances. You must use ten letters in each line and ten letters only once in the entire three lines. Throughout the whole piece, make sure you produce a semantically oriented rhythm, without sacrificing any meaning. Do all of the above publicly in one attempt, without revision or amendment, in absence of any formal training in eloquence and rhetoric.

Impossible as the above may seem, this is exactly what the Qur'ān achieved in its shortest chapter, *Al-Kawthar* (The Abundance); and it was expressed through Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who was not known to have composed any poetry nor cultivated any special rhetorical skills.

Informed by both Islamic and Western scholarship, this essay aims to showcase to an English speaking audience the Qur'ān's miraculous literary and linguistic inimitability.1 This will be achieved by analysing its smallest chapter, and it will address key objections. Although this essay will also be appreciated by Arabic speakers, it will not delve into the deep linguistic debates because it will be of no significance to those unfamiliar with Arabic linguistics.

Making it Relevant to English Speakers

The analysis of literary and linguistic features is related to *balāghа* (□□□) in the Arabic language.2 This encompasses the use of rhetorical devices, which refers to language that aims to please and persuade; eloquence, including choice of words, word order and conciseness; and the

interrelation between style, structure and meaning. English speakers may be familiar with these ideas, however given the context of this essay, the relevance of the content presented may be questioned.

It is important to note that these literary and linguistic features are universal and not only applicable to the Arabic language.3 For instance, in the English language, we use numerous rhetorical devices to convey ideas in a manner that transcends the mere cold, clinical transfer of information. Mark Forsyth in his book, *The Elements of Eloquence: Secrets of the Perfect Turn of Phrase*, lists over thirty five rhetorical devices, or figures of rhetoric, that aim to achieve the above. For example, he mentions a rhetorical device referred to as 'diacope'. This is a statement in the form A B A, and because the statement is in this form, it somehow makes the statement more powerful and memorable. "Bond, James Bond" is an example of a diacope. Mr. James Bond could have stated his name in a number of different ways but by presenting it in the form of a diacope, he delivers an effect on the listener that causes the statement to be memorable.4

The conceptualisation of eloquence is highlighted when one thinks about the difference between poetry and prose. Both poetry and prose convey ideas. However, a good poem invites the reader to revisit the poem and enjoy the persuasive beauty of its expression, while prose would deliver information in the most effective way possible and the reader may not feel the urge to revisit it. Consider, for example, Emily Dickinson's poem *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*:

"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm –

I've heard it in the chillest land –
And on the strangest Sea –
Yet – never – in Extremity,
*It asked a crumb – of me.*5

If a comparison were to be made between a textbook on organic chemistry and the poem above, we can see that in the case of the poem the style is of utmost importance. We are deriving pleasure from the mere reading of the poem while the most important quality of the textbook is the conveying of technical information. One of the unique features of the Qurʾān is its efficient transfer of information in a semantically optimal way, as we would expect from prose, all the while presenting the reader with the pleasant experience of persuasive beauty, as we would expect from a poem. Notwithstanding further technicalities, and other nuances, this suffices as an introduction to the universality of the ideas that are going to be unpacked and explained in this essay.

The Backdrop

Before analysing Al-Kawthar it is important to briefly explain the challenge of the Qur'ān, the linguistic environment in which it was revealed, and the book's literary impact and authority.

The Challenge

Several verses in the Qur'ān express a *Taḥaddī* to its readers. The word *Taḥaddī* in Arabic literally means "Challenge". According to many scholars, these verses refer to the linguistic and literary inimitability of the Qur'ān, which lies at the heart of the Qur'ān's claim to being of Divine origin. The Qur'ān states:

"If you are in doubt of what We have revealed to Our messenger, then produce one chapter like it. Call upon all your helpers, besides Allah, if you are truthful."6

And

"Or do they say he fabricated the message? Nay, they have no faith. Let them produce a recital like it, if they speak the truth."7

The unique literary and linguistic features of the Qur'ān have been used by Muslims to articulate a number of arguments to substantiate their belief that the book is from the Divine. The inimitability of the Qur'ān developed into the Muslim theological doctrine of *al-iʿjāz al-Qur'ān*. The word *iʿjāz* is a verbal noun that means 'miraculousness' and comes from the verb *aʿjaza*, which means: "to fail to act, to be or become incapable of, to become powerless, impotent or unable to carry out something."8

According to numerous classical Qur'ānic commentators, the various verses that issue a challenge to produce a chapter like it daringly call for the linguistic experts of any era to imitate the Qur'ān's linguistic and literary features.9 The tools needed to meet this challenge are the finite grammatical rules, literary and linguistic devices, and the letters that comprise the Arabic language; these are independent measures available to all. Jalal al-Din al-Suyūṭī, a prolific 15thcentury writer and scholar, summarises this point:

"…when the Prophet brought [the challenge] to them, they were the most eloquent rhetoricians so he challenged them to produce something like the Qur'ān, and many years passed and they were unable to do so as God says, *Let them then produce a recitation similar to it, if indeed they are truthful* (Q.52:34). Then, [the Prophet] challenged them to produce 10 chapters like it where God says, *Say, bring then ten chapters like it and call upon whomever you can besides God, if you are truthful*. Then, he challenged them to produce a single [chapter] where God says, *Or do they say he [i.e. the Prophet] has forged it? Say, bring a forged chapter like it and call upon whomever you can besides God, if you are truthful*(Q.11:13). When the [Arabs] were unable to produce a single chapter like [the Qur'ān] despite there being the most eloquent rhetoricians amongst them, [the Prophet] openly announced the failure and inability [to meet the challenge] and declared the inimitability of the Qur'ān. Then God said, *Say, if all of humankind and the jinn gathered together to produce the like of the Qur'an, they could not produce it—even if they helped one another* (Q.17:88)."10

The Arab poetic and literary masters of the 7th century failed to produce anything like that of the Qur'ān. They were powerless and incapable of producing anything like it. The fact that it has not been matched since it was first revealed, does not surprise most scholars familiar with the Arabic language and the stylistic features of the Qur'ān. This conclusion will be substantiated in this essay with the literary and linguistic analysis of the Qur'ān's shortest chapter.

The Linguistic Environment

Understanding the context of the challenge is significant in appreciating the Qur'ān's inimitability. The Qur'ān posed this challenge to the greatest Arabic linguists; the 7th century Arabs. The fact that they reached the peak of eloquence is affirmed by many scholars. According to 9th century biographer of the poets, Al-Jumaḥī, "Verse was to the Arabs the register of all they knew, and the utmost compass of their wisdom; with it they began their affairs, and with it they ended them."11 14th century scholar Ibn Khaldūn highlights the importance of poetry in Arab life: "It should be known that Arabs thought highly of poetry as a form of speech. Therefore, they made poetry the archives of their history, the evidence for what they considered right and wrong, and the principal basis of reference for most of their sciences and wisdom."12

Linguistic ability and expertise were a highly influential feature of the 7th century Arab social environment. The literary critic and historian Ibn Rashīq illustrates this: "Whenever a poet emerged in an Arab tribe, other tribes would come to congratulate, feasts would be prepared, the women would join together on lutes as they do at weddings, and old and young men would all rejoice at the good news. The Arabs used to congratulate each other only on the birth of a child and when a poet rose among them."13 9th century scholar Ibn Qutayba defined poetry as the Arabs saw it: "The mine of knowledge of the Arabs, the book of their wisdom… the truthful witness on the day of dispute, the final proof at the time of argument."14

7th century Arabia developed a socio-cultural environment that had all the right conditions to facilitate the unparalleled expertise of the Arabic language. Navid Kermani, a writer and expert in Islamic studies, explains the extent to which the Arabs had to study to master the Arabic language, which indicates that the 7th century Arab lived in a world that revered poetry: "Old Arabic poetry is a highly complex phenomenon. The vocabulary, grammatical idiosyncrasies and strict norms were passed down from generation to generation, and only the most gifted students fully mastered the language. A person had to study for years, sometimes even decades under a master poet before laying claim to the title of poet. Muhammad ﷺ grew up in a world which almost religiously revered poetic expression."15

Their linguistic abilities notwithstanding, they collectively failed to produce an Arabic text that matched the Qur'ān's linguistic and literary features. Linguistics expert professor Hussein Abdul-Raof asserts, "The Arabs, at the time, had reached their linguistic peak in terms of linguistic competence and sciences, rhetoric, oratory, and poetry. No one, however, has ever been able to provide a single chapter similar to that of the Qur'an."16 17

Muhammad Abdullah Draz, who was a scholar and professor of Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University, affirms how the 7th century experts were absorbed in the discourse that left them incapacitated: "In the golden age of Arab eloquence, when language reached the apogee of purity and force, and titles of honour were bestowed with solemnity on poets and orators in annual festivals, the Qur'anic word swept away all enthusiasm for poetry or prose, and caused the Seven Golden Poems hung over the doors of the Ka'ba to be taken down. All ears lent themselves to this marvel of Arabic expression."18

A powerful argument that supports the assertion that the 7th century Arabs failed to imitate the Qur'ān relates to the socio-political circumstances of the time. Central to the Qur'ānic message was the condemnation of the immoral, unjust and evil practices of the 7th century Meccan tribes. These included the mistreatment of women, unjust trade, polytheism, slavery, hoarding of wealth, infanticide and the shunning of orphans. The Meccan leadership was being challenged by the Qur'ānic message, and this had the potential to undermine their leadership and economic success. In order for Islam to stop spreading, all that was needed was for the Prophet's ﷺ adversaries to meet the linguistic and literary challenge of the Qur'ān. Such a linguistic response to the challenge would effectively expose Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a charlatan and fraud. The Qur'ān would easily be debunked publicly. With such humiliation, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would have lost supporters across Arabia. However, the fact that Islam succeeded in its early, fragile days in Mecca testifies to

the fact that its primary audience was not able to meet the Qur'ānic challenge. The fact that the Meccan leadership had to resort to extreme campaigns, such as warfare and torture, to attempt to extinguish Islam demonstrates that the easy method of refuting Islam—meeting the Qur'ānic challenge—failed.

Linguistic and Literary Authority and Impact

It is important to note that non-Muslim and Muslim scholars do not contend that the Qur'ān is an authority in Arabic literature and has had an unparalleled influence. For instance, Wadad Kadi and Mustansir Mir state:

"Although Arabic, as a language and a literary tradition, was quite well developed by the time of Muhammad's prophetic activity, it was only after the emergence of Islam, with its founding scripture in Arabic, that the language reached its utmost capacity of expression, and the literature its highest point of complexity and sophistication. Indeed, it probably is no exaggeration to say that the Qur'an was one of the most conspicuous forces in the making of classical and post-classical Arabic literature."19

The Qur'ān's unique and unparalleled use of the Arabic language was the cause of the dramatic intellectual revival of desert Arabs, and after thirteen years of the first revelation, it became the foundational reference for a new civilisation. This inimitable speech, the Qur'ān, became the unique source of the new civilisation's political, philosophical, and spiritual outlook. David Margoliouth, who was a Professor of Arabic at University of Oxford, explains this impact of the Qur'ān:

"The Koran [sic] admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world. Though the youngest of the epoch-making works belonging to this class of literature, it yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect which it has produced on large masses of men. It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character. It first transformed a number of heterogeneous desert tribes of the Arabian peninsula into a nation of heroes, and then proceeded to create the vast politico-religious organizations of the Muhammadan world which are one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to reckon today."20

Karen Armstrong, a popular historian, argues that the literary uniqueness of the Qur'ān, with its new literary form, ensured Islam's success:

"It is as though Muhammad had created an entirely new literary form…Without this experience of the Koran, it is extremely unlikely that Islam would have taken root."21

Reason for Revelation

At this stage, it is useful to note the background to Al-Kawthar's revelation. Notwithstanding a difference of opinion, many Qur'ānic exegetes maintain that this chapter was revealed as a response to al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il who called the Prophet ﷺ "cut off", when the Prophet's ﷺ son passed away.22 For instance, the exegesis known as *Tafsīr Al-Jalalayn* states:

"This was revealed regarding al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il, who called the Prophet [ﷺ] *abtar* (cut off) when his son al-Qāsim died."23

It was a source of huge pride and joy for a 7th century Arab to have a son. It was a means for being remembered and for one's name and lineage to continue long after one's death. Hence the death of the Prophet's ﷺ son was perceived to be a source of dishonour and shame in the Arab culture of the time.

According to authentic historical reports, al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il was one of many who attempted to denigrate the Prophet ﷺ in this way. Others included 'Uqbah ibn Mu'ayt, Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf, and

Abu Lahab.

In response to such attacks, God revealed three verses to console, elevate, and advise the Prophet ﷺ It was narrated the Prophet ﷺ that, despite the suffering endured by the loss if his son, he raised his head after a nap, and smiled. His companions asked him why he was smiling and he replied:

"Just now this chapter was revealed to me: *In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Verily, We have granted you Al-Kawthar. Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice (to Him only). For he who hates you, he will be cut off*."24

The power of these three lines was able to change the perspective from focussing on what was taken away from the Prophet ﷺ to focus on what was given to him. It was able to transform the emotions associated with loss and suffering into emotions that made the Prophet ﷺ smile.

Unparalleled Use and Frequency of Linguistic and Literary Features

The 108th chapter, Al-Kawthar, like all the other chapters in the Qur'ān has an abundance of linguistic and literary features. According to many scholars and academics, the Qur'ān has a greater use of literary and linguistic devices and features than any other text, past or present.25 Below are some examples of how chapter Al-Kawthar achieves this. The list below is not exhaustive, however, it provides compelling evidence to substantiate the miraculous inimitability of this chapter.

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَر

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

innā aʿṭaynāka l-kawthara

faṣalli lirabbika wa-inʾḥar

inna shāni-aka huwa l-abtaru

[Indeed We have given you the abundance,

So pray to your Lord and sacrifice,

Indeed your enemy is cut off.]

1. Emphasis

إِنَّ

inna

[Indeed/Surely]

☐☐The☐☐ is the emphatic particle with the semantic implication of 'certainty', 'indeed', and 'surely'.26 This particle contributes to the first line's emphasis that it is without a doubt that the One who owns and has power over everything has given you the abundance. Starting the chapter with this particle also serves as an exclamatory device to excite the attention of the listener or reader. With this in mind the ☐use☐of☐☐ has the effect of "Hey! Unquestionably, the One who has full power and ownership over all things has given you the abundance." (*See points 2 to 8*).

2. Choice of Pronoun

إِنَّا

innā

[Indeed/Surely, We]

The first-person plural is used which suggests the magnificence of Lordship, majesty and ability.27 It indicates power, certainty, ability, greater quantity and it can be used to stress status and greatness. This is an apt choice of pronoun because it refers to power and ability. This adds to the verse's persuasive force, because it is affirming that God, who is powerful and able to do all things has given the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the abundance. Combined with the previous point (*see point 1*), the effect is "Hey! Unquestionably, the majestic, powerful creator, who has power over all things and who is the master and owner of everything has given you the abundance." *(See points 3 to 8*).

3. Word Choice

أَعْطَيْنَاكَ

aʿṭaynāka

[We have given you]

The word أعطينا, in comparison to similar words, is more apt due to some subtle, conceptual differences. The Qur'ānic choice indicates to hand over a thing that someone owns with one's own hand and that it is coming from someone most excellent in giving.28 Other words of similar meanings, not used in this chapter, do not provide these additional subtleties. In the context of the objective of consoling the Prophet ﷺ this choice of word is precise as it strengthens the sentence emphasising the surety of giving, ability, greatness, power and intimacy (*see point 10*).

4. Past Tense

أَعْطَيْنَاكَ

aʿṭaynāka

[We have given you]

The word أعطينا has been used in the past tense which indicates that is has already happened, thus making it definitive.29 In other words, it is of absolute certainty that the Prophet ﷺ is going to receive Al-Kawthar that it has been articulated as if it has already happened. Interestingly, use of tense makes sense of Divine predetermination. The above semantically oriented use of tense accentuates the meaning of surety, power and greatness. It also expresses the certainty of a promise, in this case the Prophet ﷺ will have Al-Kawthar—a river in paradise and all that is good (*see points 6 and 7*).

5. Plural

أَعْطَيْنَاكَ

aʿṭaynāka

[We have given you]

The word أعطينا is in the first-person plural form. This further highlights, as mentioned in the previous points, ability, majesty and power (*see point 2*). This emphasis of power and majesty further accentuates the intended meaning of the verse and chapter as a whole; to console the Prophet ﷺ and to emphasise that it is without any doubt that he has been given the abundance.

6. Word Choice

الْكَوْثَرَ

L-Kawthara

[Al-Kawthar/The abundance]

This word Al-Kawthar has many layers of meaning, with a multitude of semantic implications that enhance the communicative effectiveness of the verse. According to the Prophet's ﷺ teaching, Al-Kawthar refers to the river in paradise with an abundance of good in it:

"It is a river that God, the Mighty and Exalted, promised me. There is an abundance of good in it. It is a fount that my community will gather by on the Day of Standing [the Day of Judgement]."30

12th century Qur'ānic exegete and polymath Fakhruddīn Al-Rāzī postulates that the word Al-Kawthar, in addition to meaning a great river in paradise and a bequeathing of a great abundance, can also mean Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ spiritual progeny.31 In other words his nation (*ummah*), until the Day of Resurrection. This is indicated by the Qur'ān in Chapter Al-Ahzab, where God says, "The Prophet is worthier as a guardian of the believers than they are of themselves."32 From this perspective, the spiritual progeny of the Prophet ﷺ is a million times more than his detractors, and his community love him more than they love their own parents.33

Linguistically, Al-Kawthar signifies plentiful, multitude, overflowing, rich, unstinting and unending. The triliteral root for this word are the letters kāf-thā-rā (ك ث ر). This root has the following meanings:

"to increase in number, to outnumber, to happen frequently; to show pride in wealth and/or children; to be rich, plentiful, abundance; river."34

Other derivations of this root include:

- *Kathura*: to be or become a lot, many, much, numerous.
- *Kaththara*: to cause increase in number, or to multiply.
- *Akthara*: to do something in great quantities or frequently; to cause something to increase or multiply.
- *Kathratun*: multiplicity, abundance, multitude.
- *Akthar*: more than.35

Classical exegete Ibn Kathīr, citing Ibn 'Abbās, mentions that Al-Kawthar denotes an abundant goodness, which includes the river in paradise.36 Ibn Kathīr justifies this view by asserting that the word Al-Kawthar "comes from the word *kathrah* (abundance) and it (Al-Kawthar) linguistically means an abundance of goodness. So from this goodness is the river (in Paradise)."37

Imām Al-Qāsimi echoes this view by postulating that the word Al-Kawthar refers to all the good in both this life and the afterlife, which God blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with. He cites Sa'īd b. Jubair, the famous pious predecessor, who states:

"Al-Kawthar is all the great goodness God blessed to Muhammad ﷺ" A man asked: "We heard that Al-Kawthar is a river in Paradise." Sa'īd b. Jubair replied: "That is just one, amongst many, of the great goodness that God blessed Muhammad ﷺ with."38

In summary, Al-Kawthar is a perfectly selected word that conveys the meaning of perpetual abundance of all that is good (*see points 7 and 8*). This word, in the context of this chapter, cannot be replaced by any other word.

7. Comprehensiveness and Perpetuity

الْكَوْثَرَ

L-Kawthara

[Al-Kawthar/The abundance]

The word Al-Kawthar is prefixed with the definitive article◻︎◻︎. One of the meanings of the definite article includes denoting the entire class of something. Since Al-Kawthar is not denoting a specific thing, the entire class is to be inferred. This has the semantic implication of "the abundance of that is good". Al-Rāzī maintains that the inclusion of the الfacilitates a "comprehensive meaning" and conveys "the most complete abundance."39

From a morphological perspective, the use of the◻︎ within the main triliteral root emphasises the semantic implication of the overall meaning of the verse. The◻︎ implies intensity and perpetuity. This denotes that the abundance of good that has been given is perpetual, ongoing.

8. Word Arrangement

الْكَوْثَرَ

L-Kawthara

[Al-Kawthar/The abundance]

The word Al-Kawthar is an attribute denoting plentiful or abundance. However, this word has been aptly placed at the end of the verse with no adjective after to be attributed to it. This, as Al-Rāzī's argues, linguistically facilitates the desire meanings of vagueness, inclusivity, and encompassment; to indicate that it refers to all that is good.40 If God had bestowed one thing in great multitude then that would have been mentioned. However, nothing is specified after the word Al-Kawthar, which indicates everything or many things, and in this context, implying that the Prophet ﷺ has been given an abundance of everything that is good.

9. Conceptual Relatedness (intertextuality)

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ

Faṣalli lirabbika wa-in'ḥar

[So to pray to your Lord and sacrifice]

The 'fa' (◻︎) particle, meaning 'so', is causative.41 This indicates bidding and a recommendation to the Prophet ﷺ to be thankful for the abundance he has been given. This conceptually relates to *tawḥīd* (affirming the oneness of God). The oneness of God is the central theme of the Qur'ān which permeates every chapter. The Arabs at the time of revelation would worship, pray and sacrifice to 'deities' other than God. Therefore this statement is not only logical and rational, i.e. to be thankful as a result of being the beneficiary of abundant good, it also serves as a way to illustrate the difference between the Prophet ﷺ and polytheists who would worship and offer sacrifices to idols. This chapter thematically coheres with a major theme in the Qur'ān, affirming the oneness of God. However, there are verses that specifically relate to this chapter, these include:

"Say, 'My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for God, Lord of all the Worlds; He has no partner. This is what I am commanded, and I am the first to devote myself to Him.'"42

"And do not eat anything over which God's name has not been pronounced, for that is breaking the law. The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you: if you listen to them, you too will become idolaters."43

Notwithstanding the interrelatedness of the verses, another effect of ◻︎ serves to connect the abundance given to the Prophet ﷺ to the advice that he should focus on his Lord and become indifferent to the hate and denigration expressed by his enemies. Focussing on gratitude and the expression of that gratitude (worship) is a way of helping the Prophet ﷺmove from a potential state of hurt to one of contentment.

Considering the above, it is evident that Al-Kawthar conceptually relates to other verses, chapters,

and themes within the Qur'ān. This feature from a linguistics point of view is called thematic intertextuality.

10. Choice of Noun

رَبِّكَ

Rabb

[Your Lord]

The noun *Rabb,* Lord*,* has been used instead of "Creator" or "Allāh". Rabb has specific semantic implications. The root for the noun *rabb* is rā-bā-bā (□ □ □) and it refers to the following meanings:

"master, lord, owner, guardian, to have possessions; to be characteristic of; to pamper; to raise, to educate."44

According to classical scholar Al-Bayḍāwī, the noun is related to *tarbiya*, that has the associated meanings of nurturing, and to develop something to perfection:45

This noun is perfectly placed to enhance the overall meaning of the chapter. It facilitates the following semantic implication, "Your Lord who possesses, has power over, and owns everything, is giving you the abundance, which includes elevating and raising your status." Although the name Allāh could have been used—because it does include the above meanings (as well as the meanings of all of God's names and attributes)—it would not be specific enough. Rabb has the specific meaning required to emphasise ownership, power, ability, nurturing, etc.

11. Grammatical Shift: Iltifāt

كَ ... رَبِّ ... إِنَّا

innā… rabbika

[Indeed We… your Lord].

Grammatical shifts are an effective rhetorical strategy that are richly and diversely employed by the Qur'ānic text. Known as *iltifāt* in Arabic, it is an accepted, well-researched part of Arabic rhetoric.46 This literary device enhances the text's expression and one can find references to it in the books of Arabic rhetoric by Al-Athīr, Suyūṭī and Zarkashī.47

These grammatical shifts include change in person, change in number, change in addressee, change in tense, change in case marker, using a noun in place of a pronoun and many other changes.48 The main functions of these shifts include the changing of emphasis, alerting the reader to a particular matter, and enhancing the style of the text.49 Its effects include creating variation and difference in a text to generate rhythm and flow, and to maintain the listener's attention in a dramatic way.50

In Al-Kawthar, there is a change from the first-person plural "We" to the second person "…your Lord". This change is not an abrupt shift; it is calculated and highlights the intimate relationship between God and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ In the first verse the use of "We" is used, this emphasises the majesty, power and ability of God. This choice of personal pronoun calls attention to the fact that God has the power and ability to grant Prophet Muhammad ﷺ "…The Abundance". All of which are ideas expressed in the first verse. In the second verse, it shifts to the second person, "your Lord". This has been done to emphasise intimacy, closeness and love; the phrase has a range of meanings that imply master, provider, and the one that nurtures. This is an apt use of language, as the concepts in the same verse are about prayer, sacrifice and worship: "So pray to your Lord and sacrifice". Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is also to console Prophet Muhammad ﷺ using such intimate language enhances the psycholinguistic effect.

The Qur'ān uses this feature in such a way that conforms to the theme of the text, while enhancing the impact of the message it conveys. It is not surprising that in his book, *Discovering the Qur'an:*

A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text, Professor Neal Robinson concludes that the grammatical shifts used in the Qur'an, "…are a very effective rhetorical device."51

12. Word Choice

وَانْحَرْ

wa-in'ḥar

[Sacrifice]

This word is from the triliteral root nā-ḫā-rā (□ □), and it has the following meanings:

"chest, the upper part of the chest, the throat, to slaughter; to strive; to pour down heavily."52

This word is multi-layered. The first layer of meaning is that it can refer to the sacrifice of an animal. The second is to stand in prayer. The third is to raise one's hand in prayer reciting the *takbīr* ('God is greater'). This word is apt in conveying the meaning of sacrifice as it has layers of meanings that are most appropriate for the ideas and concepts that are trying to be delivered in this chapter. Surely, it is only out of God's greatness that Al-Kawthar is given to the Prophet ﷺ and it should be received with gratitude and sacrifice, which are manifested in Islam via sacrificing animals, prayer, and proclaiming and reflecting on God's names (*dhikr*).

13. Emphasis

إِنَّ

inna

[Indeed/surely]

The emphatic particle is used to emphasise who is truly and unquestionably cut off. This highlights and accentuates that it is the enemies of the Prophet ﷺ that are the one's who are truly cut off (*see points 14 to 17*).

14. Your hater

شَانِئَكَ

shāni-aka

[Your hater]

The word shāni-aka is derived from the triliteral root shīn-nūn-hamza (□ □ □) which has the meaning of "To hate, to abhor… hatred; ugliness; evil-doers."53 The word also denotes "hatred mixed with enmity and evilness of disposition."54

This is an apt choice of word. When someone hates another person they can hate for justified or unjustified reasons. Anyone who hates the Prophet ﷺ who is the best human being to have walked on earth, will never hate for justified reasons. The hater will hate because they are evil and have ugly characteristics. The word shāni-aka not only refers to hatred, it denotes someone who is evil. Alternative words for hate would not carry such a meaning. For instance, the word *karraha* coming from the root kāf-rā-hā (□ □), means to "to cause to be hated, loathed, disliked".55 This word does not have the additional meaning that this hatred comes from an evil person or is driven by ugly characteristics.56 This is why it can be argued, that the Qur'ān uses this word in the context of believers hating the rejection of the truth and evil: "He has made disbelief, mischief, and disobedience hateful to you."57 The Qur'ān would not, in this context, describe believers as harbouring a type of hatred driven by evil characteristics.

15. Word Choice

الْأَبْتَرُ

l-abtaru

[cut off]

The use of the word □ □ □, *al-abtar* (cut off), is most suitable as it was a word used by the enemies of the Prophet ﷺ against him. Its triliteral root is bā-tā-rā (□ □ □) and it refers to the following meanings: "he cut, or cut off, a thing before it was complete; or he cut, or cut off, in any manner; or he cut off (a tail or the like, entirely, or utterly)".58

The word in the context of the chapter implies "destitute, one [whose bloodline is] cut off, one with no male descendants"59 and "he made him to become cut off without offspring or progeny".60 Linguistically it also relates to "suffering loss", "anything cut off" and "anything cut off from good and prosperity".61

The word with the definite article, the preceding pronoun, and its placement at the end of the verse emphatically indicate that in reality, it is the enemies of the Prophet ﷺ who are the ones who truly are cut off. They have been completely cut from any good and acquired great loss (*see points 15 to 17*). This is also accentuated by the preceding two verses which are an intense, emphatic use of language to show that all good has been given to the Prophet ﷺ The contrast between the word *Al-Kawthar* and *abtar* emphasises the idea that the haters of the Prophet ﷺ are cut off from all that is good.

16. Choice of Particle: Confinement/Exclusivity

الْأَبْتَرُ

l-abtaru

[…that is cut off]

The definite article, *alif lam* (□ □), after the pronoun *huwa* (□ □) denotes confinement and exclusivity. The use of the definite article may designate either definition, by referring to a specific person or thing, or it may designate generality. In the context of this verse, it designates a specific person or thing. In this case, it is the enemies of the Prophet ﷺ that are truly cut off.62 The effect here is that it is the enemies, and not the Prophet ﷺ who are really cut off.

17. Emphasis with the Pronoun

هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

huwa l-abtaru

[he is cut off]

The Qur'ān uses □ □, third person masculine singular personal pronoun, meaning "he (is)". This further emphasises that the specific person who hates the Prophet ﷺ is cut off. In Arabic, you can emphasise a noun by adding a personal pronoun. The Qur'ān adds □ □ to present the following meaning: "Indeed, your hater, *he* is cut off." Without the □ □, the meaning would be less emphatic: "Indeed, your hater is cut off."

18. Word Arrangement

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

inna shāni-aka huwa l-abtaru

[Indeed your enemy is cut off]

This return of insult is not merely done as a form of 'tit for tat' rather it is eloquently arranged as the last word used in the chapter to stress the meaning. The effect is that it is they who are really cut off as the word *l-abtaru* is placed right at the end of the chapter to allude to this fact. There are no words after *l-abtaru*, just like there is no goodness for one who is truly cut off.

19. Specificity and Generality

The chapter does not mention the one who insulted the Prophet ﷺ by name. Therefore, it applies and to anyone who attempts to denigrate the Prophet ﷺ The chapter does not mention any particular details of who the enemy is; so, in this sense it is both specific (to the one who insulted the Prophet ﷺ) and general (to all those who insulted the Prophet ﷺ in any manner), as Al-Rāzī states, "it mentions him only by description, not by name, so to be inclusive of anyone like him who plots against the true religion."63

20. Semantically Oriented Repetition & Rhythm

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

The Qur'ān has been described as an "inimitable symphony" whose rhythm moves "men to tears and ecstasy".64 The Qur'ān not only selects the most apt words and phrases, but also achieves a unique sound within a unique literary structure. The repetition of the second person of *ka*(□) ('you' x 3) is singling out, focusing on and making exclusive the Prophet ﷺ The emphasis is a stylistic move to fortify and strengthen the Prophet ﷺ The consistent use of the second person establishes continuity in the verse and generates rhythm. The rhythm generated by the repetitive use of the *ka* (□□) is semantically oriented, as the emphatic use of the second person, to exclusively console the Prophet ﷺ, is responsible for the rhythm.

21. Rhyme

The words that are responsible for the chapter's rhyme are *L-kawthara*, *Wa-in'ḥar* and *L-abtaru*. Reciting and pronouncing these words with *tajwīd*, which refers to the science of correct pronunciation and recitation of the Qur'ān, produces the following rhyme:

- …thar
- …har
- …tar

22. Semantically Oriented Rhyme

From the previous point, it is clear that this chapter has a rhyme. However, when someone wants a poem or a work of prose to have a rhyming scheme there is usually a playoff between meaning and rhyme. A semantically optimal word may be sacrificed for a word that is less appropriate in order for the literary construction to rhyme. What is fascinating is that this chapter does not only have a rhyme, its rhyme is created with the most relevant and apt words (*see points 3 to 8, 12, and 15 to 18*). Furthermore, the words used are only used once in the chapter and they are not used anywhere else in the Qur'ān (*see point 25*).

23. Prophesy

An interesting observation of this chapter is that it also is factual and accurate. At the time when this chapter was revealed the Prophet ﷺ was in one of the lowest points in his life. His enemies were the ones who seemed to have prosperity and power. However, the reality soon changed. The Prophet ﷺ turned out to be the most successful Prophet ﷺ both as a man delivering a Divine message and as a

statesman. His enemies eventually lost their power. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ is the most remembered, loved and praised person on earth. No one's life is recorded and remembered as the life of the Prophet ﷺ Someone is always praising and remembering the Prophet ﷺ every second on this planet; it is always the Islamic prayer time somewhere on earth, therefore there is always the call to prayer, which mentions the Prophet ﷺ A key feature of perfecting one's faith as a Muslim is to love the Prophet ﷺ more than oneself and family. In fact, a sign of self-love—wanting goodness for oneself—is to love the Prophet ﷺ For loving and following him leads to a special Divine love and forgiveness.65

What makes this chapter prophetic and factual is the events that took place after this revelation. As mentioned in the section explaining the reason for its revelation, it was al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il and the other leading Arabs who denigrated the Prophet ﷺ However, after these revealed verses the Prophet ﷺ succeeded in spreading Islam, idol worship (the religion of the Prophet's ﷺ haters) disappeared, and the most honoured lineage among the Arabs now is the Prophet's ﷺ, and the most honoured and praised person in Arabia (and one can argue in the whole world) is the Prophet Muhammad himself ﷺ

24. Unique Structure

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

This chapter has 10 lexical items. A lexical item refers to a word or a chain of words that make up the building blocks of a text or language. For example, the words "I love you" are three words but one lexical item, also, the words "I am not" are three words but one lexical item. In the context of Arabic, it can be a word with a linguistic particle, preposition, etc.

This chapter has 10 lexical items:

1. Innā, indeed We
2. Aʿṭaynāka, have given you
3. L-kawthara, Al-Kawthar/The abundance
4. Faṣalli, so pray
5. Lirabbika, to your Lord
6. Wa-in'ḥar, and sacrifice
7. Inna, indeed
8. shāni-aka, your enemy
9. huwa, he is
10. L-abtaru, cut off

Fascinatingly, the whole chapter has used 10 letters only once:

1. ع
2. ط
3. ي
4. ف
5. ث
6. ص
7. ح
8. ش
9. ه
10. ت

Interestingly, it also uses ten letters in each verse, with the exception of the last verse. However, in

the last verse, the letter□ has been used which is considered a letter that is "cut off" from the letter□. There is also a difference of opinion whether□ is considered a full letter. Although the majority view is that it is.

The challenge to produce something like this chapter does not only refer to producing three lines of classical Arabic. The challenge includes using only 10 lexical items, and 10 letters only once throughout the whole chapter.

25. Unique Words

Chapter Al-Kawthar is one of the one-hundred and fourteen chapters of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān contains over seventy-thousand words and this chapter uses four words that have not been used in the entire book. These words are:

1. l-kawthara: the root□ □ □ occurs 167 times in the Qur'ān. One of its forms (□□) occurs once as the noun.66
2. wa-in'ḥar: the root□ □ □ occurs only once in the Qur'ān, as (□□) the form I verb.67
3. Shāni-aka: the root□ □ □ occurs three times in the Qur'ān. One of its forms (□□□) occurs only once as the active participle.68
4. l-abtaru: the root□ □ □ occurs only once in the Qur'ān, as (□□) the noun.69

The use of these four words not used anywhere else in the Qur'ān, provides strong evidence that there was a careful selection of words in composing this chapter. The Qur'ān did not reuse familiar words found in the Qur'ān, but aimed for originality and a choice of words that maximally enhanced the communicative effectiveness of the chapter's theme and message.

26. Semantic Mirroring of Previous Chapter

Imam Ibn 'Ādil Al-Hanbali cites Imam Ibn Al-Khatīb who explains the special structure of this chapter. Ibn Al-Khatīb shows how this chapter is the direct opposite of the chapter, Al-Mā'ūn, the chapter that comes directly before Al-Kawathr. In Al-Mā'ūn (chapter 107), the hypocrites are described in the following way: they are stingy (verse 2-3), they abandon their prayers (verse 4-5), they are insincere (verse 6), they do not give people their rights (verse 7). In Al-Kawthar, the Prophet ﷺ is described as follows: he has overabundance of goodness that negates tight-fisted stinginess (verse 1), he establishes his prayers (verse 2), he is sincere in doing this for "your Lord" (verse 2), he gives sacrifices, which includes doing good and sacrificing animals to give to charity to the needy (verse 2). The chapter ends by implying that the true belief of the Prophet ﷺ will outlast the showmanship of his haters (verse 3). The point-by-point parallel between chapters 107 and 108 is how the Qur'ān exhibits the stark difference between hypocrisy and true faith.70

In this light, Al-Kawthar exhibits a stunning ability to semantically mirror the same themes of Al-Mā'ūn; yet, Al-Kawthar is only 3 verses while Al-Mā'ūn is 7 verses long. The linguistic prowess here is clear. Chapter 108 of the Qur'ān is able to mirror perfectly chapter 107 but with less than half the number of verses. The Qur'ānic challenge to mimic Al-Kawthar is not simply a challenge to compose three lines; rather, it is a challenge to convey seven lines of imagery and information in three lines without any loss of meaning.

27. Universal, Timeless Lessons

Although this chapter was specifically revealed to console and advise the Prophet ﷺ there are universal and timeless lessons for those who experience tragic loss and hatred from people. God reminds and affirms that He has given the Prophet ﷺ the abundance. It can be said that God is reminding the Prophet ﷺ to be grateful and joyous due to the blessings He has received. God then advises the Prophet ﷺ to pray and sacrifice, which is an expression of that gratitude. Sacrifice can

also mean giving charity and help others. Finally, God is saying that those who hate are truly cut off, and since the Prophet ﷺ should be busy with prayer, sacrifice and doing good, the haters should be left to God.

This consolation and advice can be universalised. For all of us who face tragic loss and enmity from people we should:

- Be grateful for the abundance of blessings we have. Focussing on gratitude changes one's perspective and emotional state. Once in a state of gratitude, it is difficult to be in a negative state at the same time.
- Pray to God and sacrifice, give charity and help others. Expressing gratitude facilitates the state of being grateful. Doing good and helping others also serves as a way to feel better and increase our well-being.
- Leave the haters to God. We must realise they are cut off from blessings because the very fact that they hate is a symptom of an underlying cause. They are not happy, they do not realise their abundant blessings. If they did, they would not hate this way. Ignore your haters, and what they say against you, because they will, ultimately, only harm themselves and fail in the end.

Objections and Points to Consider

"There is no consensus on the nature of the Qur'ānic challenge"

There is a difference of opinion concerning the Qur'ānic challenge. Some scholars maintain that the challenge is about the meaning, rather than the literary features or linguistic devices. Others argue that the challenge refers to God preventing people from being able to produce anything like the Qur'ān, a doctrine espoused by the Al-Mu'tazila, the 'rationalist' school of Islamic theology. Notwithstanding the difference of opinion amongst the scholars, none of them denied that there was something special about the literary and linguistic nature of the Qur'ānic discourse. It is important to note that the argument expressed in this essay is not dependent on any formal doctrine. The argument does not attempt to prove any doctrine to be true, it aims to linguistically investigate the inimitability of the Qur'ān's shortest chapter. Since it can be illustrated that the Qur'ān's shortest chapter is linguistically remarkable, one should stand in the possibility that there is something special about the Qur'ānic discourse. Whether one doctrine is more coherent than the other is not of primary importance, the objective is to—through exhibiting the remarkable linguistic and literary nature of Al-Kawthar—encourage engagement with the Qur'ān, which will facilitate Divine mercy and guidance.

"Pre-Islamic and classical poetry can be analysed in the same way"

There are a few key reasons why the Qur'ān cannot be compared to pre-Islamic poetry or classical poetry, like that of the highly acclaimed poet Al-Mutanabbi. With regards to being incomparable to pre-Islamic poetry, it is important to note that the Arabs of the 7th century achieved unparalleled linguistic and literary mastery, yet they failed to challenge the Qur'ān, and the leading experts of the time testified to the inimitable features of the Qur'ān. One of the best linguists of the time, Walīd ibn al-Mughīra, exclaimed:

"And what can I say? For I swear by God, there is none amongst you who knows poetry as well as I do, nor can any compete with me in composition or rhetoric—not even in the poetry of jinns! And yet, I swear by God, Muḥammad's speech [meaning the Qur'an] does not bear any similarity to

anything I know, and I swear by God, the speech that he says is very sweet, and is adorned with beauty and charm."71

Significantly, the Arab polytheists in the 7th century initially accused the Prophet ﷺ of being a poet. This was an easier thing to do than going to war and fighting the Muslims. The Arab's who perfected their use of the Arabic language and poetry studied for years under a master. None of them came out to expose Muhammad ﷺ as being one of their students. The very fact that Muhammad ﷺ was successful in his message demonstrates that he succeeded in showing the poets and linguists of the time, that the Qur'ān is indeed miraculously inimitable. If the Qur'ān was not inimitable, any poet or linguist could have produced something better or similar to the Qur'ānic discourse. Expert in Islamic studies Navid Kermani makes this point clear: "Obviously, the Prophet succeeded in this conflict with the poets, otherwise Islam would not have spread like wildfire."72

In fact, the pre-Islamic poet Labīd ibn Rabī'ah, one of the famous poets of the Seven Odes, embraced Islam due to the inimitability of the Qur'ān. Once he embraced Islam, he stopped composing poetry. People were surprised, for "he was their most distinguished poet".73 They asked him why he stopped composing poetry; he replied, "What! Even after the revelation of the Qur'an?"74

Concerning, the Qur'ān being compared to the classical poetic masters such as Abu at-Tayyib Ahmad ibn al-Husayn al-Mutanabbi al-Kindi, it is important to note that Al-Mutanabbi was considered an unmatched poetic genius by many Arabs. Some have argued that although other poets have used the same panegyric genre and poetic metre as the great poet, they have not been able to match his level of eloquence and stylistic variance. If this is true, then it may undermine the Qur'ān's inimitability. However, this acclamation of Al-Mutanabbi is unfounded.

The first thing to note is that this contention is vague. Al-Mutanabi did not write a book of over seventy-thousands words, like the Qur'ān. His collection of poems contains poems that are unrelated to each other and not placed into chapters. Also, there have been imitations of Al-Mutanabbi's work by the Jewish poets Moses ibn Ezra and Solomon ibn Gabriol. Interestingly, the Andalusian poet Ibn Hani' al-Andalusi was known as the Al-Mutanabbi of the West.75

One significant point is that medieval Arabic poetry did not create new literary genres. This was due to the fact that it depended on previous poetic work. The academic Denis E. McAuley writes that medieval poetry largely hinged "more on literary precedent than on direct experience."76 In classical Arabic poetry, it was not unusual for a poet to attempt to match a predecessor's poem by writing a new one in the same poetic metre, rhyme and theme. This was considered normal practice.77 It is not surprising that Professor of Religion Emil Homerin explored the literary expression of Ibn al-Farid, and described his work as "very original improvisations on al-Mutanabbi".78

To highlight further the fact that Al-Mutanabbi can be emulated, he disclosed that he borrowed work from another poet, Abu Nuwas.79 Many medieval Arab literary critics such as Al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad and Abu Ali Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hatimi wrote criticisms of Al-Mutanabbi. Ibn 'Abbad wrote *al-kashf 'an masawi' shi'r al-Mutanabbi* and Al-Hatimi wrote a biographical account of his encounter with Al-Mutanabbi in his *al-Risala al-Mudiha fi dhikr sariqat Abi al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi*.80 The conclusions of these literary criticisms imply that although his work is the product of genius, they can be emulated. Al-Hatimi presents a stronger polemic against Al-Mutanabbi and argues the case that his poetry does not have a unique style and contains errors. Professor Seeger A. Bonebakker, who studied Al-Hatimi's literary criticism of Al-Mutanabbi, concludes that his "judgement is often well-founded and one almost ends up feeling that Mutanabbi was, after all, a mediocre poet who was not only lacking in originality, but also had insufficient competence in grammar, lexicography, and rhetoric, and sometimes gave evidence of incredibly bad taste."81

"If Shakespeare is an unparalleled literary genius, then the Qur'ān's inimitability is a human endeavour"

Willam Shakespeare is arguably the greatest English playwright that ever lived. A common objection to the argument in this essay is that Shakespeare seems to be unmatched in the history of the English language, therefore he is inimitable. Considering his unparalleled literary and linguistic skills, the Qur'ān's inimitability can be explained in reference to a literary genius. There are a few reasons why this objection is misplaced.

Firstly, the inimitability of Al-Kawthar is very different from Shakespeare's masterpieces. Al-Kawthar's frequency and nature of literary and linguistic features are incomparable to any three lines that Shakespeare has written. Considering how Al-Kawthar was revealed, the background context, the intertextuality, its structure, its optimal interrelation between style and meaning, this point is not controversial.

Secondly, Shakespeare did not display sustained matchless eloquence, or inimitable expressions that were expressed without any amendments or revisions. Mark Forsyth argues that Shakespeare's abilities developed over time:

"Shakespeare was not a genius. He was, without the distant shadow of a doubt the most wonderful writer who ever breathed. But not a genius. No angels handed him his lines, no fairies proofread for him. Instead, he learnt techniques, he learnt tricks, and he learnt them well…. Shakespeare got better and better and better, which was easy because he started badly, like most people starting a new job."82

In fact, Shakespeare's initial works were, according to Forsyth, "… not very good."83

Thirdly, Shakespeare's literary forms are not unique. His sonnets are written predominantly in a frequently used metre called the iambic pentameter, a rhyme scheme in which each sonnet line consists of ten syllables. The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs or iambic feet.84

Finally, since the blueprint of Shakespeare's work is available, it is not surprising that the English dramatist Christopher Marlowe has a similar style, and that Shakespeare has been compared to Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher and other playwrights of his time.85

Conclusion

This essay showcased the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'ānic discourse by analysing its shortest chapter, Al-Kawthar. The literary and linguistic analysis provides compelling evidence that it was not humanly possible to produce the three lines of Arabic. Given the fact that the Prophet ﷺ was not known to have cultivated any rhetorical gifts and he was not recognised as a poetic master, how can Al-Kawthar be reasonably explained?

It is important to remind the read that Al-Kawthar has only 10 lexical items with at least twenty-seven linguistic and literary devices. It has a semantically oriented rhythm and rhyme, whilst maintaining optimal meaning. The chapter was revealed as a response to specific circumstances, however it is universal in its advice and meaning. It also relates to concepts and key themes of a book that it is part of, and it uses four words that are not used in the book, which has over seventy-thousands words. This chapter uses 10 lexical items and the whole chapter uses 10 letters only once, and it semantically mirrors the chapter before it in an eloquent way without any superfluous use of language. Considering the Prophet ﷺ revealed this verse publicly, without revision or edition, compounds the conclusion that it could not have been humanely possible to produce such literary expression. All of this is in the context of the Qur'ān presenting a challenge to humanity to produce one chapter like it. Although the 7th centruy Arab linguists of the time were best place to respond to the Qur'ānic challenge, they failed to do so, and resorted to boycott, abuse, war and torture.

How is this humanely possible?

Not being able to adequately answer this question should make one stand in the possibility that the Qur'ān is the word of God:

"Nor could this Qur'ān have been devised by anyone other than God. It is a confirmation of what was revealed before it and an explanation of the Scripture—let there be no doubt about it—it is from the Lord of the Worlds."86

The remarkable features of Al-Kawthar should also encourage the reader to take the Qur'ān's message seriously. The Qur'ān teaches that our purpose in life is to worship God.87 This involves affirming God's oneness, adoring Him and directing and singling out all acts of worship to Him alone.88 The way to worship God is to follow Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and by doing so it will facilitate for us a life of contentment and eternal bliss in the hereafter. It is only through this that we can also hope to be part of the community that will gather at the river of paradise that was promised to him ﷺ—Al-Kawthar.

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